Arnold and Carlton College

Contents

Grade Descriptors

Inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the report. They use a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1– outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses

- grade 2 – good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses

- grade 3 – satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses

- grade 4 – less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths

- grade 5 – poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision, curriculum areas and lesson observations, for colleges inspected during 1996-97, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1 *%*	*2* *%*	*3* *%*	*4* *%*	*5* *%*
Curriculum areas	9	59	30	2	–
Cross-college provision	18	51	27	4	–
Lesson observations	19	42	31	7	1

Source: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report. Grades were awarded using the guidelines in Council Circular 93/28, Assessing Achievement.
Sample size: 122 college inspections

Retention and Pass Rates

Where data on students' achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in two ways:

- as a retention rate, which is the proportion of students who completed a course in relation to the number enrolled on 1 November in the first year of the course

- as a pass rate, which is the proportion of students which passed examinations in relation to the number entered. Pass rates for GCE A level are quoted for grades A to E unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for GCSE courses are quoted for grade C or above unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for vocational and professional awards are for successful completion of the full award.

Summary

Arnold and Carlton College

East Midlands Region

Inspected October 1997

Arnold and Carlton is a general further education college in the Nottingham conurbation. The college produced a comprehensive self-assessment report through its quality assurance system. This involved the majority of teaching staff, some support staff and governors. The report did not explicitly list strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum areas although it provided general evaluation of the college's provision. It was supported by detailed subject and cross-college area reports which were referenced to sources of evidence and included action plans for improvement. There was an appropriate focus on external verifiers' reports, students' opinions and the views of outside agencies. In conjunction with other colleges, the college has produced benchmarks against which it can measure itself. It has established and used performance indicators. The report did not provide a sufficiently rigorous evaluation of students' learning and students' achievements.

The college offers a wide range of courses at different levels and is responsive to the needs of its local community. There is good research into the needs of the local labour market. Links with the TEC and local schools are effective. The corporation determines the strategic direction of the college. Management is good. Students receive appropriate advice and guidance before and on entry to the college. Standards of teaching are generally high. The recording of achievements is thorough and effective. The tutorial system operates more effectively on some courses than on others. In general, the provision of specialist resources is good. However, the quality and availability of information technology equipment vary considerably between the two main college centres. The accommodation provided for students at the Digby Avenue centre is generally satisfactory, but elsewhere in the college a number of areas are in need of substantial refurbishment. The Bath Street centre provides a bright, modern learning environment. The college should address: inconsistency in the extent to which students receive learning support; low retention rates; the low levels of achievement; the need to sharpen the focus of the corporation on quality assurance; varying degrees of effectiveness in implementing quality assurance for all aspects of work; and some weaknesses in resources and accommodation.

The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below.

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Computing	3	Support for students	2
Engineering	3	General resources	3
Business and office administration	2	Quality assurance	3
Music technology	3	Governance	2
English and communication studies, psychology and sociology	3	Management	2

The College and its Mission

1   Arnold and Carlton College is a general further education college which was established in 1960. The mission of the college is to provide quality in education, opportunities for effective learning and a welcoming environment. It is one of eight post-16 colleges providing general and vocational courses to school-leavers and adults in the Nottingham conurbation. The schools in the city of Nottingham, in the main, take pupils from 11 to 16 years, and there are six schools for pupils aged from 11 to 18 years within the borough of Gelding which the college serves. The Nottingham conurbation is a diverse, mainly urbanised area comprising the city of Nottingham and the districts of Broxtowe, Gelding and Rushcliffe. The area has a varied economy which has changed significantly in recent years with the decline in the coal mining industry and the contraction of manufacturing sectors. Unemployment at 8.2 per cent remains higher than the regional and national averages. Within the conurbation, there are pockets of very high unemployment and long-term unemployment is a serious problem. The largest proportion of the population lives within the city of Nottingham, including a high proportion of Greater Nottingham's minority ethnic residents. There is a great deal of ethnic diversity in the local community and a large proportion of the younger population is from minority ethnic groups.

2   Educational achievement of school-leavers in Nottingham has been low compared with the national average. In 1995-96, only 37 per cent of pupils in Nottingham schools obtained five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) grades A to C, compared with the national average of 46 per cent. The average point score of general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) students in Nottingham schools in the same period was 4.8, compared with the national average of 5.2. The staying-on rate in post-16 education and training is low, at 50 per cent.

3   The college has set clear targets for growth and in the last two years has exceeded its funding agreement with the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college's average level of funding is £14.27 per unit for 1997-98. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £16.72 per unit. In 1996-97, there were over 7,000 students at the college on FEFC-funded programmes, of whom approximately 1,300 were full time. There were also 1,200 non-FEFC funded students. The college's provision is divided between six sections; business and office administration, community studies, mathematics, science and humanities, learning development, technology and creative arts. Inspection took place in four of these sections.

The Inspection

4   The college was inspected during the week beginning 6 October 1997. The college was notified of the curriculum areas to be inspected approximately two months before the inspection. Inspectors had previously observed some of the activities which formed part of the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report and other information held by directorates of the FEFC were evaluated prior to the week of the inspection. The college submitted data on students' achievements for the two years 1995 and 1996 which were validated against class registers and pass lists issued by examining and awarding bodies. Because the inspection took place early in the academic year, data on students' achievements for 1997 were not available until the inspection. Some had still not been received by the college and the remainder had not been validated. The inspection was carried out by a team of nine inspectors working for a total of 38 days, and two auditors working for three days. During the inspection, meetings were held with governors, managers, college staff and students. A range of documentation provided by the college was also examined.

5   Of the 66 lessons inspected, 71 per cent were rated good or outstanding and 8 per cent were less than satisfactory. The profile of grades 1 and 2 is substantially better than the average for all colleges inspected in 1996-97, according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. The average level of attendance in the lessons inspected was 78 per cent and represents an average of 12 students attending each lesson against an average of 14.7 on the register. This is similar to the average attendance for all colleges of 77 per cent with 10.8 students per class against an average of 14 on register according to the chief inspector's report. The highest attendances were in engineering (87 per cent) and computing (86 per cent), and the lowest was in music technology (54 per cent). The following table summarises the grades given to the lessons inspected.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	2	4	5	0	0	11
GCSE	0	5	1	0	0	6
GNVQ	1	8	2	2	0	13
NVQ	5	4	1	0	0	10
Other vocational	4	14	5	3	0	26
Total	12	35	14	5	0	66

Computing

Grade 3

6   The inspection included the observation of 14 lessons. Inspectors concluded that the college's self-assessment report accurately identifies the major strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths
- the induction into full-time courses
- effective and well-planned teaching
- an appropriate balance between practical and theoretical work
- the use of work experience on all full-time courses
- students' action planning and the use of records of achievement
- good pass rates on some courses
- the review and updating of course content
- high standard of computing facilities at Bath Street

Weaknesses
- some inappropriate use of accommodation
- poor retention rates on some courses
- insufficient data on students' destinations
- the lack of some information technology resources for computing students
- the lack of books in appropriate locations and a limited number of periodicals

7   There is a broad range of entry levels to computing courses that meet the needs of full-time and part-time students. The full-time national diploma and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) programmes attract both school-leavers and mature students;

the courses leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in using information technology provide progression routes from an introductory level into other specialist courses; and the back-to-work programme offers an introduction and progression into office information technology skills. Some of the students on the programming course use the course for professional updating.

8   The four-week induction period is effective. There are comprehensive and informative handbooks for all full-time courses. Course content is reviewed to ensure that it is appropriate. Similarly, the equipment and software, including programming languages, are monitored to ensure that they reflect recent developments and practices in industry. The resources for computing at Bath Street are of a high standard which is not matched elsewhere in the college.

9   Most courses are well planned and managed. Most teaching is effective and well planned. Lessons have clear objectives. Students are provided with good-quality learning packs, study books and handouts produced to a common style. There is an appropriate balance between individual practical work, assignments, small group work and presentations. Some of the briefings for learning activities take place in one of the open-plan information technology centres where distractions reduce their effectiveness. The students achieve appropriate standards of work. Some of the portfolios are of a high standard. Students' progress is monitored and reported on regularly. The importance of punctuality is emphasised. Work is returned promptly in most cases. Priority is given to the completion of records of achievement. All students on full-time courses have work experience. This is well managed. It forms the basis of additional coursework, is valued by students and has led to offers of employment from the employers with whom the students are placed.

10   Students' achievements on computing-related courses have varied considerably over the last three years. On just under 50 per cent of courses, the results were at or above the average for the further education sector. There has been a significant improvement in retention and pass rates on courses leading to the NVQ information technology, and an overall increase in the number of students on GNVQ intermediate courses who achieve their learning goals. The results on the national diploma course have declined to well below the average for the sector over the three-year period.

Examples of students' achievements in computing, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping			1995	1996	1997
Advanced vocational (GNVQ, national diplomas and certificates)	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)		100 67	67 50	50 100
Intermediate vocational (GNVQ, first diplomas and certificates)	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)		87 23	100 24	34 100
NVQ level 2	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)		* *	31 100	87 100
C&G level 1	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)		* *	44 86	56 100

Source: college data
***course not offered**

Engineering

Grade 3

11   Inspectors agreed with many of the points made in the colleges self-assessment report. However, it makes little comment on the quality of teaching and learning.

Key strengths

- generally well-structured teaching in classroom and practical sessions
- retention rates on most courses
- industrious students who can manage their own learning effectively
- the range of students on craft courses
- well-equipped facilities for motor cycle courses

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on many courses
- insufficient evidence of the use of information technology in the portfolios of students' work
- falling numbers on full-time technician courses
- the drab interior of the engineering centre

12   Inspectors observed 10 lessons involving both practical and theoretical work. The average rate of attendance at lessons was 87 per cent. The range of courses in mechanical and electrical engineering provides good opportunities for full-time and part-time students. The college's NVQ level 2 motor cycle mechanics course recruits nationally. Full-time GNVQ and/or national diploma courses have low enrolments. Other courses, such as the full-time NVQ level 2 craft course, are recruiting strongly as a result of the college's good links with the local training organisations and companies. There is a wide range of students on engineering courses.

13   Teaching is generally well structured in both classroom-based lessons and practical lessons. Most teachers had lesson plans and schemes of work although many were no more than a list of topics to be covered. In the classroom there was usually some form of presentation by the teacher followed by an activity carried out by the students. As well as introducing new topics, teachers often took the opportunity to review topics covered previously. There were many references to industrial applications. Teachers usually questioned the students skilfully. A range of assessments was used including practical, assignment and end tests. Teachers' marking was generally thorough and included detailed comments to help students improve their work. Students signed their work to record that they had noted the comments. The college's self-assessment report accurately covered the planning of the teaching but it did not make sufficient reference to the quality of the teaching.

14   Generally, students' work was of an appropriate standard in both practical and theory lessons. Most students were industrious. On the GNVQ advanced engineering course, second-year students were able to work on their assignments with a minimum of supervision. In practical situations, students were clearly motivated and were keen to complete their work. They were able to progress at their own pace with help from the teacher when necessary. Protective clothing was worn when appropriate. Completed portfolios for students on the GNVQ advanced engineering course and the NVQ level 2 craft course contained much work of a good standard. The craft course portfolios contained a large amount of written material which presents a considerable workload for those who are academically less able. There was little use of information technology to present graphics and computer-aided drawings or data in the form of spreadsheets. Many of these points relating to the students' work were not covered in the self-assessment report.

15   The practical facilities for engineering include workshops and practical teaching areas which, although appropriately laid out and suitable for their purpose, are unattractive with the exception of the motor cycle provision. The motor cycle workshop is particularly well equipped and well laid out. The engineering equipment is suitable for the courses taught and most of the strengths and weaknesses relating to resources are identified in the self-assessment report. There is a computing room at the Digby Avenue site which is available for use by engineering students. It has general-purpose software for wordprocessing and specialist software such as computer numerically controlled programming software. However, there is no access to this specialist software. There is also a drawing office.

16   The retention rates on most courses are good. Pass rates are variable and some are poor. In a number of cases, the pass rates improved markedly after students resat their examinations. Retention rates and the poor pass rates were accurately covered in the self-assessment report.

Examples of students' achievements in engineering, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Two-year vocational	Retention (%)	95	60	†
	Pass rate (%)	38	39	†
One-year vocational	Retention (%)	94	74	†
	Pass rate (%)	29	31	†

Source: college data
†final results not available at the time of the inspection

Curriculum Areas

Business and Office Administration

Grade 2

17   The inspection concentrated on GNVQ courses at intermediate and advanced levels and on courses leading to an NVQ in business administration. Eleven lessons were observed at levels 1 to 3, including both full-time and part-time provision. The self-assessment for business studies was very comprehensive. Inspectors considered that the college's self-assessment report overstated some strengths and understated weaknesses.

Key strengths

- a broad range of well-planned courses from foundation to level 4

- predominantly good teaching in business administration courses

- students who are able to work on their own effectively

- regular review of individual students' progress

- efficient and effective implementation of the curriculum

- a wide range of accessible learning materials and excellent audiovisual aids

- well-organised programmes which are flexibly arranged and valued by students

Weaknesses

- unreliable and insufficiently analysed data on students' achievements

- no well-established arrangements for monitoring students' destinations consistently

- variable results on the courses leading to NVQ administration

- some low pass rates on GNVQ courses

- insufficient up-to-date computers at the Digby Avenue business centre

18   The section offers a broad range of well-planned courses from foundation to level 4. The curriculum is efficiently and effectively implemented. For example, a series of lead lectures have been developed for mixed-level NVQ administration students. The lecture is followed by carefully differentiated tasks appropriate to each level. All the programmes inspected are well organised, flexibly arranged and valued by the students. Most teaching on the business administration courses is good. There is a wide range of good learning materials. These are valued by the students and are easily accessible to both students and staff. Students across the section demonstrate that they can work well on their own. There are regular reviews of the progress of individual students. Key skills are usually an integral part of courses or can be taken as additional units to the main qualification. There is a robust internal verification process. The section operates at both the Digby Avenue and Bath Street centres. There is good industrial-standard hardware and software at the Bath Street business centre but the Digby Avenue business centre does not have enough up-to-date computers. There is excellent access to a full range of audiovisual aids throughout the Bath Street centre and in the business centre at Digby Avenue.

19   Pass rates for GNVQ are variable and some are poor. There are also variable results in NVQ administration, with the majority of students exceeding the target time for achieving a full award. Nevertheless, a significant number of students at each NVQ level achieve more than 50 per cent of the award in the standard timescale. Data on students' achievements were unreliable and there was insufficient analysis of the data at section level to justify the judgements made in the self-assessment report. Arrangements for the consistent monitoring of students' destinations have only recently been made. In 1997, the college's young enterprise company, made up of students on the GNVQ advanced business course, was placed as runner-up in a regional competition.

Curriculum Areas

Examples of students' achievements in business and office administration, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Advanced vocational GNVQ business studies	Retention (%)	*	51	64
	Pass rate (%)	*	65	62
Intermediate vocational GNVQ	Retention (%)	84	92	59
	Pass rate (%)	56	45	66
NVQ level 1 administration	Retention (%)	*	100	76
	Pass rate (%)	*	0†	42
NVQ level 2 administration	Retention (%)	10	65	75
	Pass rate (%)	19	55	56
NVQ level 3 administration	Retention (%)	87	100	82
	Pass rate (%)	33	10	28

Source: college data
†low numbers of candidates, mainly students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who were not expected to achieve full awards in the standard time scale. A significant number of students at each NVQ level achieve more than 50 per cent of the award in the standard time scale
*college unable to provide accurate data

Curriculum Areas

Music Technology

Grade 3

20 The inspection included observation of 10 lessons covering the full range of first and national diplomas and the higher national certificate in music technology. Inspectors found that the college's self-assessment report accurately reflects the quality of specialist resources and support for students. However, they considered the assessment of some aspects of the quality of teaching and learning and students' achievements to be too high.

Key strengths

- a broad range of courses from first diploma to higher national certificate
- well-motivated students in practical sessions
- effective one-to-one support and teaching of practical skills
- teachers' good industrial experience
- a committed and co-operative staff team
- some good accommodation
- industrial-standard software and equipment

Weaknesses

- significant lateness and poor attendance on the part of students
- some poor examination results and retention rates
- some poor teaching of theory
- insufficient attention to the effective management of time
- some ineffective classroom management
- no access for students with restricted mobility

21 The college offers a wide range of courses at different levels for students in music technology and sound engineering. The national diploma course is one of the first in the country for disc jockeys. The college has promoted a 'women into music' course aimed at attracting women to the industry. The college has a good level of equipment and resources to support specialist keyboard provision. This has been recognised by the music industry: the college is one of only four Steinberg accredited centres in the country.

22 Course management is generally sound. Careful attention is paid to issues identified through internal and external verification. Teachers are well qualified and most have current knowledge and experience of the music industry and form a cohesive team. A particular strength of the section is the effective teaching of professional practical skills. Students are well motivated in practical sessions. Students are given practical experience of industrial-standard technology that enables them to mix and edit their own compositions. In most practical lessons, the teaching was good and it was carefully prepared. Teachers set tasks which enabled students to discover their own solutions. They offered the students advice when necessary and encouraged them to work effectively on their own. Teachers explained specialist terminology carefully and strengthened students' understanding of it through useful handouts. In some theory lessons, teachers did not link the theory to practical work or make sure that students had understood important points. Some learning was not well managed. In a few lessons teachers relied too heavily on handouts. Some opportunities to help individual students or check the understanding of the whole group were missed. Some lessons failed to start promptly. Students arrived late for lessons and often failed to meet their deadlines for the completion of work.

23 Assignments are well designed to help students develop their skills. Marking schemes and assessment schedules are explained in course leaflets which are issued to all students.

Most work required of students has a strong practical emphasis. Project briefs follow a standard format and most encourage original work. Written assignments, which involved students in analysing songs or the work of musicians were of an appropriate standard and they were appropriately graded. When marking work, teachers did not always provide written guidance on how students might improve their language, style and structure.

24   In 1996 and 1997, levels of achievement and retention rates on BTEC first and national diploma courses were significantly below the national average. Pass rates for the BTEC first diploma course were 20 per cent below the national average. Only one in five of the students who originally enrolled on the two-year BTEC national diploma course completed it.

25   Good facilities for music technology include a professional recording studio. The equipment for composing, recording and editing music matches the standards found in industry. The accommodation includes sound booths, a suite used for electronic music synthesis and seminar and theory rooms. There is no access to it for wheelchair users. Before the inspection, the college addressed many of the weaknesses in accommodation identified in its self-assessment report.

26   The self-assessment report for the curriculum area is comprehensive. Judgements are detailed but some strengths have been overstated. There is a strong emphasis on resources issues. Judgements on students' achievements and retention rates are insufficiently incisive. Performance indicators lack rigour and weaknesses are not identified clearly enough.

Examples of students' achievements in music technology, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
BTEC national diploma in pop music	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)	* *	** **	20 46
BTEC first diploma in performing arts	Retention (%) Pass rate (%)	* *	67 43	71 37

Source: college data
*courses started September 1995
**courses not running in this year

English and Communication Studies, Psychology and Sociology

Grade 3

27   The inspection covered the subject areas of English and communication studies, psychology and sociology. Inspectors observed 21 GCE A level and GCSE lessons, involving full-time, part-time and evening classes. The self-assessment report was wide ranging. Some of the evaluation was not specific enough. Inspection evidence confirmed most of the major strengths and weaknesses identified by the college. However, inspectors considered that the evaluation of the planning associated with widening access and the future development of the GCE A level and GCSE programme was not sufficiently detailed. The report did not identify the confusion which exists over the roles and responsibilities of staff within English and communication studies in particular, and the humanities area in general.

Key strengths

- effective use of a variety of teaching and learning activities
- effective integration of key skills with other aspects of coursework
- students' success in progressing to higher education
- effective exploration of equal opportunities in subject areas
- the comprehensive range of the equipment available in teaching areas
- effective workbooks to support learning
- well-presented students' work of an appropriate standard

Weaknesses

- some poor achievements by students, especially in the social sciences
- poor retention rates
- insufficiently detailed schemes of work
- absence of lesson plans or lessons plans lacking clear objectives
- the inappropriateness of some overcrowded accommodation for private study and individual assignment work
- students' poor punctuality in some lessons
- students' lesson time spent in excessive copying of notes from the board
- insufficient activity on the part of the students in some lessons
- unclear management roles

28   Teaching is sound and there is a purposeful working atmosphere in most lessons. Students experience a variety of appropriate teaching and learning activities. They are provided with useful printed learning materials. Their work is carefully presented and it is of an appropriate standard. Students are motivated and respond to encouragement. Work is set regularly and it is marked thoroughly. Students' progress is regularly reviewed using detailed records of achievement. In some lessons, the students are not given enough to do. Some teachers fail to check that the students understand the lesson. They do not encourage the students to exercise initiative in their learning or to work effectively on their own. In those cases, students are seldom given copies of schemes of work in order to help them plan their workloads. The college has recently introduced arrangements designed to cater for students' differing study needs. These include flexible starting times for classes and more opportunities for students to work on their own. There is, however, some inconsistency in the way these arrangements are implemented and in the extent to which their effectiveness is monitored. Staff meet regularly

to review their work. There is insufficient sharing of good practice amongst staff who plan and teach GCSE and GCE A level subjects across the college to work more closely together. Some staff with responsibility for curriculum development have found it difficult to implement this role.

29   Most examination results in English and communication studies are at, or above, the national average for the further education sector. Examination results in the social sciences are less satisfactory. Most pass rates are below average for colleges of further education although the examination results of mature students show a slight improvement in 1996. Value-added data indicate that most social science students examined in 1996 failed to achieve the result predicted for them on the basis of their qualifications on entry. In 1997, results were close to those predicted. There are serious problems of low retention on some English and communication studies courses and, with one or two exceptions, retention rates on GCSE and GCE A level courses in the social

sciences are poor. Retention rates on the access to higher education course have been very variable though staff are aware of the problem and are addressing it.

30   Lessons take place in accommodation which is clean and well cared for. Students normally work in a pleasant learning environment. In some instances, classes are not matched to rooms of an appropriate size and, as a result, the range of learning activities which can be carried out in them is restricted. There is a comprehensive range of equipment and it is well used. The learning resource centre at the Bath Street centre includes the library. The centre has poor resources for English and communication studies.

Examples of students' achievements in English and communication studies, psychology and sociology, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
English GCSE	Retention (%)	90	68	53
	Pass rate (%)	37	52	57
Sociology GCE A level	Retention (%)	78	68	83
	Pass rate (%)	41	40	54
Sociology GCSE	Retention (%)	90	52	67
	Pass rate (%)	40	53	82
Psychology GCE A level	Retention (%)	95	83	66
	Pass rate (%)	43	18	90
Psychology GCSE	Retention (%)	80	63	61
	Pass rate (%)	34	60	67
English literature GCE A level	Retention (%)	89	80	72
	Pass rate (%)	76	49	91

Source: college data

Support for Students

Grade 2

31   The college's self-assessment report identifies that there is a system for ensuring that students receive appropriate advice and guidance, pre-entry and on programme. Inspectors agreed that there is a consistent approach to student induction, the recording of students' progress and the maintenance of records of achievement. However, the report makes no reference to the variable effectiveness of tutorial provision and of additional support in numeracy and literacy.

Key strengths

- a well-managed advice and guidance process
- informative and clearly-presented college literature
- clear reflection of the needs of mature students in the literature and in the guidance process
- effective induction for students
- support for students considering a change of programme
- records of achievement valued by staff and students
- good working relationships with Guideline Careers Service
- clear arrangements for providing students with access to specialist careers guidance
- arrangements for guidance on childcare, personal and financial support

Weaknesses

- inconsistent implementation and monitoring of additional support
- variability in tutorial practices across the college and lack of clarity about the tutorial entitlement

32   Students receive impartial guidance before, and on, entry to the college and the guidance process is well managed. The literature produced by the college is clear, informative and helpful to school-leavers and adult returners alike. There is a variety of ways in which potential students may gain further information about the college and its courses, including guidance sessions based in the local community which are designed specifically for mature enquirers. During 1997-98, for the first time, individuals thinking of studying at the college are being invited to become students for a day to gain an insight into the college's programmes. All students are offered a guidance interview during which an initial action plan is agreed. Applicants then attend a course-specific interview. The initial action plan is later used to begin the process of recording achievement.

33   A clear statement of the induction to which students are entitled is set out in the student diary and handbook. Students receive a useful checklist of the information to be covered and the tasks to be undertaken during induction. There is a requirement for all programmes to provide an introduction to courses, together with information about the college environment and the support which is available to students. Induction is structured across four weeks, to tie in with a newly-introduced course review that occurs at the end of the four-week period. The review is helpful to students who may be considering changing programmes.

34   Arrangements to provide students with additional support in numeracy and literacy as early as possible have not been applied consistently. All full-time students are tested during their induction using the Basic Skills Agency (BSA) screening test. The results are analysed by learning support tutors and the level and method of support are then determined. The timescale set for this process was not being adhered to in all areas. Additional literacy and numeracy support is provided for students who need it, either within

their main course, or through scheduled workshops in the college's learning resource centres. It is unclear who has overall responsibility for monitoring students' attendance and progress at these workshops. There is insufficient liaison between the tutors and the learning support team. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are asked to indicate the additional support they require during the application and interview procedure. For students with learning difficulties, there is a specifically-designed programme, 'Learning for Life', that consists of a range of modules accredited through the Open College Network. Students negotiate individual timetables. The college provides a range of appropriate support for these students.

35   The college has a tutorial policy and an entitlement for all full-time students to have a personal tutor. There is confusion both in the college literature and in practice over whether part-time students have an entitlement to a personal tutor. The tutorial curriculum covers personal and social development, careers education and guidance, and the development of the students' record of achievements. Although there has been some training for tutors, and a useful tutor information pack has been produced, there remains inconsistency in the effectiveness of tutorial provision across the college. The process of recording achievement is valued by staff and students. The college encourages the use of records of achievements during the admissions process and their continued maintenance and development. There is a service level agreement with Guideline Careers Service and the college has good working relationships with it. Students are aware of the arrangements whereby they have access to specialist careers guidance.

36   The enhancement programme is designed to offer all full-time students opportunities to take part in team activities, clubs and societies, and courses leading to qualifications in information technology and key skills.

The programme operates on one afternoon a week; a few students have timetabled classes on that afternoon and are, therefore, unable to take part in the programme. There is some criticism from students that the activities are too sports oriented.

37   Informative noticeboards in the college, clearly-written guidance in the prospectus and a supportive guidance team ensure that students know where to go to arrange childcare in either of the day nurseries, or whom to contact if they wish to discuss personal or financial matters. Students spoke highly of the childcare provision. They were very clear about how applications could be made to the access fund and to the college's hardship fund. The college counsellor is available at both sites at well-publicised times. Within the student services team there is an attendance welfare officer who works with tutors to follow up students' absence.

General Resources

Grade 3

38   The college's self-assessment of resources included the quality of staff as well as the quality of the general cross-college facilities and the accommodation. The framework for inspection for this area does not cover staffing. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgements on the accommodation but felt that a number of weaknesses in the general cross-college facilities had been understated.

Key strengths
- the ability of the network infrastructure to support the information and learning technology strategy
- the improved co-ordination of learning resources through the convergence of the work of the library and learning resource centres

- an appropriate range of learning materials in the learning resource centres

- the audiovisual aids facilities, particularly those at Bath Street, and the overall co-ordination of audiovisual aids provision

- the quality and quantity of information technology facilities at Bath Street

- good support for students by audiovisual aids technicians in video editing and production at the Bath Street centre

Weaknesses

- no central database of all college learning resources

- insufficient planning for the replacement of audiovisual aids equipment

- the inadequate range of books and other learning materials and the incomplete learning resources catalogue at Bath Street

- insufficient information technology resources at Digby Avenue

- insufficient support to help students to use information technology facilities on their own

- the lack of approval of the refurbishment plan for the Digby Avenue centre

- lack of space utilisation data

39   The quality of the college's information technology equipment varies between the college centres. There are excellent facilities in purpose-built surroundings at Bath Street. At Digby Avenue, there are insufficient workstations and the quality of some of these does not meet appropriate industry standards. The college's computer network meets the current requirements of the curriculum. There are good-quality study materials that help

students to develop their information technology skills. The amount of tutorial support available for general information technology within the learning resource centres is inadequate. There is a five-year cycle for the planned replacement of information technology equipment. There is little planning for the replacement of audiovisual equipment. Most rooms in the college are equipped with a video player, overhead projector and whiteboards. Facilities at Bath Street in particular are of a good standard. There is appropriate technician support available to staff and to students who need to use video equipment and editing facilities. Shortages of staff in some areas, such as the library, and a lack of technicians to support information technology, have inhibited some developments in this subject area.

40   The work of the learning resource centres and the library have been brought together. As a result, the support available to students has been strengthened. There are now joint catalogues of learning materials at the individual centres. However, the catalogue at Bath Street does not list the books held at Digby Avenue. There is an appropriate range of general learning materials in the learning centres and library at Digby Avenue to support students' research, to develop key skills and to provide information on careers. The centres also house distance learning resources for those who cannot attend college but who study at home or in their workplace. There is a small range of books and other learning materials at Bath Street.

41   The Digby Avenue centre is located in the Nottingham suburb of Mapperley. It is one of the two major centres of the college. Overall, the learning environment is satisfactory but a number of areas are in need of considerable refurbishment. Some of the classrooms are too small for the size of the groups using them. There is a modern refectory with adjoining social area. There is also a separate nursery. A spacious learning resource centre has been

created out of the former college hall. Wheelchair users have no access to the upper floor which includes the library area. There is a lack of privacy in the counselling room. The five demountable classrooms are in need of external redecoration. The sports hall is underused. The college has a large car park and a sports field which it shares with a local school. All of these points were recognised in the self-assessment report. Plans were submitted to the FEFC for a major upgrading of the Digby Avenue centre but these were not approved. The Bath Street centre is located on the edge of the Nottingham city centre. It has been extensively refurbished recently through a £3 million programme. The original two-storey building has been decorated internally and new areas such as the refectory and reception hall have been created. A new two-storey building houses the library and learning centre, an information technology suite, a new motor cycle workshop, a nursery, and other teaching and office rooms. As described in the self-assessment report, the centre provides a bright, modern learning environment. There is access to all parts of both buildings for students with restricted mobility.

42   The college has two other small centres. Sound engineering and music technology courses are located on one floor in the Oldknows Factory, a disused factory building on the edge of the city centre. Studio recording areas have been created within suitable sound-proofed areas. The East Nottingham Business Centre, located on an estate in Colwick, is a modern two-storey industrial unit which is used as a base for full-cost courses. In addition, the college has two 'outreach' guidance centres, the Arnold shop and the Calverton CORE.

43   As stated in the self-assessment report, there has been no formal monitoring of space utilisation since 1993. An annual survey of room use has been completed by teaching staff and the information obtained from this has

been used to improve room timetabling. A premises officer has been appointed recently. The implementation of a computer-based planned maintenance programme has begun this year.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

44   Inspectors agreed with the majority of key strengths though some of these were considered to be overstated. The college identified weaknesses relating to the underdevelopment of certain aspects of quality assurance. Inspectors found additional weaknesses which were not included in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- commitment of the college to set high standards and to achieve continuous improvement
- an effective system in many areas for reviewing the quality of provision and for developing an effective self-assessment process
- clear identification of targets for college programmes
- regular monitoring of the college's progress towards meeting its targets
- regular collection and analysis of students' views on the quality of the college's provision
- clear staff development procedures, closely related to the college's strategic objectives

Weaknesses

- lack of consistency and continuity in the development of quality assurance procedures
- some inconsistency and lack of rigour in implementing quality assurance procedures

- underdeveloped quality assurance procedures for the majority of business support functions and for some aspects of student support
- lack of a staff appraisal or performance review system
- lack of direct observation of teaching and learning as a part of the college's quality assurance procedures

45   The mission of the college, the strategic plan and the operating statements clearly reflect the concern of the college to set high standards and to achieve continuous improvement. However, there has been a lack of consistency and continuity in the development of policy and procedures for quality assurance. The college has conducted regular self-assessments but there has been a lack of uniformity in the operation of the self-assessment process across the college. A policy on quality was endorsed by the corporation in September 1996 with a request that it be reconsidered at a future meeting. The policy has not been resubmitted to the corporation. A new internal self-assessment system was introduced in preparation for this inspection. The format for the analysis of strengths and weaknesses and for action planning were new.

46   Most sections produced thorough individual self-assessments to a common format but there was some variation in the way in which evidence is used to support self-assessment. Quality assurance procedures in the curriculum sections are generally well developed. Staff understand the processes of course review and self-assessment. There are scheduled meetings of course teams for reviewing provision. Prompt-sheets are used to help staff follow course review procedures and there are logbooks for monitoring progress in achieving targets and recording instances of good practice. Performance indicators are used with varying degrees of effectiveness. Measurements of performance against standards is sometimes

undermined by the unreliability of data, particularly data on students' achievements. Surveys of students' opinions form part of the process of course review and the views of employers are often fed into reviews on an informal basis. Where the views of staff have been formally canvassed, response rates have been poor. Although some examples of good teaching and learning are recorded in logbooks, direct observation of teaching and learning forms no part of quality assurance or self-assessment procedures. The college recognises this as a weakness in its self-assessment report. On the basis of course reviews and measurements of performance in relation to key targets, section heads compile an assessment of each curriculum area. These assessments feed into the college's overall review of the curriculum, which informs its strategic decisions and sets policy on course approvals for the coming year.

47   In cross-college support areas, the extent to which quality assurance procedures have been developed is variable. Some areas are starting to identify standards and to measure performance against these. For example, student admissions has recently started to assess the extent to which it meets the standards contained in the charter. A manual outlines the procedures for all admissions activities. The data collection team has established a set of performance standards and the library undertakes certain checks on the quality of its service. Other teams such as learning resources, reception and some areas of student services have yet to develop procedures for quality assurance. Key teams such as finance, caretakers and technicians have not defined standards for the services they provide.

48   The college's charter is readily available to students. There has been a review of charter commitments and the college revised the format and content of its charter in August 1997. The college monitors the extent to which it meets its commitment in the charter through its quality

assurance procedures. There is a clear and rigorously implemented complaints procedure which is outlined in the student charter. Annual reports, analysing complaints, are presented to the senior management team and the corporation.

49   Collaborative provision is monitored centrally by a 'community development manager' in conjunction with appropriate specialist staff. Procedures for monitoring the quality of collaborative provision include the recording of visits by college staff. There is a requirement on partner organisations to conduct their own assessment and review. Course reviews, evaluation of students' performance and monitoring of achievements are not always carried out. Internal quality controls are sometimes poorly implemented. Progress in formalising procedures for assuring the quality of collaborative provision has been limited.

50   Staff development procedures are clear, well understood and relate closely to strategic objectives. Staff development needs are identified through quality assurance procedures. There is a commitment to professional development and there are good opportunities for staff to undertake courses and to engage in other forms of personal development. There are a number of examples of well-planned staff development such as a scheme, supported by Greater Nottingham TEC, to help staff update their industrial experience. The college does not operate a formal staff appraisal or performance review system, other than for the principal and senior managers. The college was awarded Investor in People status in 1994.

Governance

Grade 2

51   The governance section of the college's self-assessment report was accepted by governors in June 1997. The inspection team agreed with the majority of the strengths identified in the self-assessment but judged that some strengths were not adequately supported by the evidence. Some weaknesses had not been identified.

Key strengths

- the corporation's effectiveness in determining the strategic direction of the college
- vigorous debate of the college's business supported by appropriate reports from senior staff
- frequent meetings and careful monitoring of governors' attendance
- the corporation's regular assessment of its own performance and improvement of its procedures
- effective induction and training of governors
- the exceptional level of openness reflected in the remuneration committee's terms of reference
- the effective work of the nomination committee for the selection of new governors
- the code of conduct and completed register of interests

Weaknesses

- too much consideration of detailed business at corporation meetings reducing the effectiveness of committees
- the executive function which is implicit in some committees' terms of reference
- the continuous monitoring of students' achievements

52   The corporation plays a full part in determining the strategic direction of the college through a programme of 'away days' and through its regular meetings where the business of the college is debated vigorously. Governors are well supported by senior staff who present reports. Too much consideration of detailed business at corporation meetings reduced the

effectiveness of its committees. This was recognised by the corporation during its examination of the balance of full board work as opposed to committee work. As a result the committee structure has been refocused to establish an appropriate range of committees. As yet, the level of debate and actual delegation of business to these committees has been limited.

53   The terms of reference of the remuneration committee commit the college to an exceptional level of openness in respect of the remuneration of senior postholders. The terms of reference of other committees are less well defined and some suggest an inappropriate executive function. All meetings are supported by agendas, papers and minutes. The quality of these for some committees is variable making it difficult to track decisions. There is inconsistency in the amount of committee business reported to the corporation. These weaknesses were not identified by the college. Inspectors agreed that the corporation is self-critical and considers its own performance at regular intervals using a questionnaire from each member as the basis for its own contribution to self-assessment.

54   The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum. The governance of the college is adequate. The corporation has 14 members: the principal, two staff members, two nominated members, a TEC member and eight independent members. It meets frequently. A quorum has always been maintained at meetings. Attendance is monitored. Absences are reported to the corporation and appropriate action is taken quickly. Governors are recruited through the work of an effective nominations committee with vacancies being made public through advertising. Those interested in becoming a governor are provided with full

information. There are productive arrangements for the induction and training of governors. The corporation has approved a code of conduct and introduced a register of interests which is completed by all members. These strengths were identified by the college in its self-assessment report.

55   The corporation places great emphasis and priority on issues relating to quality assurance in its self-assessment. Also, as part of its on-going recognition of the importance of quality issues, it states that it reviews all quality surveys which are undertaken in the college and considers achievement against performance indicators. There is evidence that there is some improvement in standards but the corporation recognises that this needs to remain a focus. A policy document on quality is awaiting final approval by the corporation but is already being acted upon. There has been activity through working groups to address this issue. The corporation is aware of the need for the continuous monitoring of students' achievements.

Management
Grade 2

56   Inspectors substantially agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report. However, there were some issues which inspectors judged to be of greater significance than was apparent from the self-assessment report.

Key strengths
- a clear college mission which staff understand well
- the responsiveness of the college to the needs of its local community
- good market research
- a strong commitment to equal opportunities

- an effective academic board
- good methods of communication
- effective participation of staff in the development of the strategic plan
- the staff's clear understanding of the college structure, and their roles and responsibilities within it
- good financial management

Weaknesses

- action on students' low retention and achievement is still being implemented
- delay in the implementation of some initiatives because of unresolved staffing issues
- poor co-ordination between examinations section and academic section heads

57   The college mission is clear and well understood by staff. Staff actively participate in the development of the strategic plan which is carefully monitored. These strengths were identified in the college self-assessment report. Also, as it claims, the college is responsive to meeting the needs of its local community. It conducts effective research into the local labour market. There are good links with the TEC, and the college and the TEC work together in a variety of ways. For example, a partnership has been established between the college, the TEC and local engineering employers to encourage young people into training for employment in engineering. Collaboration with local schools is good. It includes link programmes, GNVQ programmes, and helping parents and children whose first language is not English to improve their language skills. The college collaborates with other further education providers.

58   The academic board focuses effectively on teaching and learning. Its membership is drawn from most college areas. Key reports on education are circulated and reviewed. Following the work of a subcommittee on quality, a discussion on standards led to the development of performance indicators for marketing. The board provides targets, including targets related to students' achievements, against which course teams measure performance.

59   The senior management team maintains an effective focus on key issues affecting the college. The college recognises that retention rates and rates of achievements are low and often poor. A working party has recently made recommendations on how improvements can be made. Courses with low numbers are reviewed.

60   Staff have a clear understanding of the college structure, how it is managed, and of their own roles and responsibilities within it. As the college identified, it has explicit policies covering all important aspects of its work. These are reviewed and revised regularly and are readily available to all staff. The college has achieved a 14.1 per cent gain in efficiency. However, there has been delay in the implementation of some initiatives, such as those designed to improve students' low retention and achievement, because of unresolved staffing issues. There is no formal costing of courses. The college has a good ratio of support staff to teachers. Inspectors confirmed that the various channels of communication within the college ensure that staff are well informed. Time is allowed for teaching sections to meet in order to discuss issues, engage in staff development and develop their teamwork. Teamwork is an aspect on which the college bases great emphasis. Few business support staff attend these meetings regularly but the college has identified the need to include all operational managers in management meetings and frameworks in future.

61   There is a strong commitment to equal opportunities in the college. There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy and a statement of the college's commitment to the policy is displayed on all college documents.

Most staff have received training on equal opportunities issues and they have a clear understanding of what is required for the effective implementation of the college's policy. Various methods are used to monitor equal opportunities in teaching and learning.

62   The management information system is meeting many of the college's needs. Access to the computerised information system is limited for some teachers who find the software system difficult to understand and use. The information data retrieval team produces standard reports and also provides some information on demand in the format required. Some teachers need training in using the management information. This development need has been recognised. Poor co-ordination between the examinations section and academic section heads has resulted in students' achievements being presented inconsistently. This has been recognised by the college and a new system has come into operation for 1997-98.

63   The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. Two of the finance team have formal accountancy qualifications. A new accounting system to improve reporting to budget holders has been introduced recently. Financial management reports include comparisons between forecasts of income and expenditure, and actual income and expenditure, for each budget. A quarterly balance sheet and forecast of cashflow information are provided and distributed to managers and the corporation.

Conclusions

64   The college produced a comprehensive self-assessment report through its quality assurance system. The report did not explicitly list strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum areas although it provided a general evaluation of the college provision and acted as a useful starting point for the inspection. The

curriculum reports were supported by detailed subject reports which were cross-referenced to sources of evidence and included action plans for improvement. In two curriculum areas inspectors judged the college grading to be overgenerous. In the cross-college areas of provision many of the findings in the self-assessment report were in agreement with the inspection team's conclusions. However, the report overemphasised some strengths and gave insufficient weight to some weaknesses revealed by the inspection. Also some aspects identified by inspectors as weaknesses were not included in the college's self-assessment. The inspection team did not agree with the cross-college grades awarded by the college.

65   Strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are listed under each section of this report. The main strengths and weaknesses are identified in the summary.

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College Statistics

Student numbers by age (July 1997)

Age	%
Under 16	2
16-18 years	14
19-24 years	82
25+ years	0
Not known	2
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1997)

Level of study	%
Foundation	22
Intermediate	20
Advanced	20
Higher education	3
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	35
Total	100

Source: college data
Note: 2,901 not specified

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 1997)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	240	770	14
Construction	0	7	0
Engineering	136	308	6
Business	238	588	12
Hotel and catering	52	12	1
Health and community care	218	436	9
Art and design	208	320	7
Humanities	170	2,949	44
Basic education	73	412	7
Total	1,335	5,802	100

Source: college data
Note: 2,901 not specified

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (September 1997)

	Perm-anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	50	225	0	275
Supporting direct learning contact	15	13	0	28
Other support	86	25	0	111
Total	151	263	0	414

Source: college data, rounded to nearest full-time equivalent

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£6,204,000	£6,827,000	£7,052,000
Average level of funding (ALF) Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£20.40	£17.75	£19.16
Payroll as a proportion of income	63%	65%	61%
Achievement of funding target	92%	112%	*
Diversity of income	35%	26%	24%
Operating surplus	£443,000	-£359,000	-£221,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)
ALF – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), Funding Allocations 1996-97 (1996-97)
Payroll – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)
Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96)
Diversity of income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)
Operating surplus – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)
*data not available

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	68	56	55
	Average point score per entry	2.8	2.3	3.4
	Position in tables	bottom third	bottom 10%	middle third
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	84	59	75
	Percentage achieving qualification	100%	71%	39%
	Position in tables	top 10%	middle third	bottom 10%
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	74	153
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	64%	46%
	Position in tables	*	middle third	bottom third

Source: DfEE
Note: the majority of the college's students are 19 years of age or older
The achievements of these students are not covered in published DfEE performance tables
*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

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